

Congressman notices disturbing tactics in first year

Published in the Colorado Community Newspapers Published: 01.15.10

By Rep. Mike Coffman

During my first year in Congress, I witnessed a disturbing pattern in legislative strategy pursued by Democrat leaders. Often in Congress, non-controversial provisions are attached to annual authorizing and funding bills, which in essence, become legislative vehicles for other measures. It's not a new practice. Both parties have long used this as a tactic to move legislation through Congress, but the Democrats' escalation last year using all three troop funding bills as a means to pass extremely controversial and unrelated social and economic policy was inappropriate and set a terrible precedent.

I firmly believe we should supply those who risk their lives for our country with the resources they need without conditions and without using them to accomplish other controversial legislative goals.

A brief review of the three measures illuminates the liberal Democrats' strategy of hijacking must-pass troop funding bills for political purposes.

Early in 2009, Democrat leaders decided to use H.R. 2346, an emergency war funding bill, as a vehicle to send billions of taxpayer dollars to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Realizing they would have a difficult time getting support for providing more than \$100 billion in new loan authority for the IMF, Democrats decided to tack the measure on to the emergency war funding bill.

With a \$12 trillion national debt and having already pushed through an auto industry bailout, a stimulus bailout, and a bank bailout, the highly controversial measure amounting to a \$108 billion global bailout, should have been considered on its own merit. Instead, Democrats chose to use our troops and emergency funding for them as leverage to pass another taxpayer funded bailout.

I unquestionably support providing our troops the funding they need, but I could not be complicit in allowing Democrats to force our troops to shoulder the additional burden of carrying the authorization and appropriation of over \$100 billion in new resources for the IMF. My ultimate goal was to band together with enough Members to force the IMF provision off the bill and pass a clean bill. Democrats had the opportunity to do the right thing and keep the war supplemental about the troops, but willfully chose not to.

After successfully tacking on a \$108 billion international bailout to an emergency war funding bill despite strong Republican opposition, Democrats in Congress decided to use the same shameful tactic to advance radical social policy in the form of "Hate Crimes" legislation.

At the eleventh hour, House Democrat leaders chose to include the Senate-passed version of a highly controversial "Hate Crimes" bill in H.R. 2647, the 2010 the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). As with IMF funding, Democrat leaders chose to attach a divisive and

highly controversial measure to our troops' annual authorization bill.

Unlike the House version which I supported, the Senate-passed version of the hate crimes measure tacked on to the final bill will have chilling effects on religious freedoms and free speech. I passionately opposed including the measure in a bill that is designed to provide resources for our soldiers whose job it is to protect the very freedoms the provision will erode. As such, I voted against H.R. 2647 and the hate crimes legislation contained therein.

While I voted against the final NDAA Conference Report, I strongly supported, and voted for, the underlying bill. I'm also deeply proud that the bill included provisions I worked hard on during my first year in Congress.

Lastly, as 2009 came to a close, Democrats yet again looked to a must-pass troop funding measure as a vehicle to pass legislation that they may not otherwise have enough support to move. Leading up to the final vote on H.R. 3326, the 2010 Department of Defense Appropriations bill, Democrats were considering attaching a highly unpalatable \$1.8 trillion increase in the national debt limit. They also considered attaching another "stimulus" package with a price tag over \$100 billion and further extension of unemployment compensation benefits, as well as a host of other unrelated provisions.

Fortunately, persistent and extremely vocal opposition by House Republicans forced Democrat leaders to recalculate their strategy preventing the attachment of the aforementioned divisive policies on the backs of our men and women in uniform. I am proud to have voted in favor of providing critical support to Americans who have volunteered and put themselves in harm's way day in and day out to protect our freedom.

As Congress begins its 2010 session Nancy Pelosi and Democrat leaders are preparing to continue this shameful strategy to pass more radical and unpopular policies. I am proud of my votes and unwavering in my support of our airmen, sailors, soldiers, and Marines. I will continue to object to maneuvers that use our troops as leverage to enact proposals that the Majority either cannot pass on their own merits or for which they want to avoid voting on directly.

Rep. Mike Coffman serves in the 6th Congressional District serving Arapahoe and Douglas counties.